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**Plans explored for new Risley Moss tower**

**Exploration work over a new observation tower for Risley Moss in Birchwood is continuing.**

The 40-year-old wooden tower - popular with local people for observing wildlife – was destroyed last year, following an arson attack.

Warrington Borough Council is making progress in developing plans for a new structure. However, there are some challenges ahead.

The council is currently undertaking a feasibility project, to establish what kind of structure can be created and the best method of construction. Also being explored is how best to ensure a new structure is robust, resistant to vandalism and cost effective to maintain. Accessibility and equality of experience issues are also being considered as part of the study.

Warrington Borough Council’s executive board member for leisure and community, Cllr Tony Higgins, said: "The Risley Moss observation tower was a really useful resource for local people to look across this beautiful nature reserve and observe the wildlife. We share the sense of disgust within the community over the arson attack which destroyed it, and we fully understand the need for a suitable replacement.

“I’d like to reassure local people that we are working hard to deliver a solution for the site. There are a number of hurdles to overcome - including design, accessibility and funding the project. However, we are making progress, and I would ask people to be patient with us as we continue to work together on deliverable plans.

“We appreciate the considerable community support for a new structure and the donations which have been so kindly provided by many local people. We also acknowledge the support and contribution from the Risley Moss Action Group. We will keep people updated, as these plans move forward.”

The replacement of the observation tower presents a number of challenges, as the site falls within a ‘Special Area for Conservation’ and is a designated ‘Site of Special Scientific Interest’. Additionally, the tower location is on top of tipped material form a former World War 2 munitions factory, meaning the area, while stable, contains contaminants that must remain undisturbed.

As part of the feasibility work, a number of design options will be evaluated in partnership with Planning Authorities and Natural England.  It is likely that the cost of a new structure will be significant and the Council will need to secure external grant aid to support a scheme. Once structure design and delivery costs are established, funding will be sought.